United Nations A/60/209

General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 August 2005

Original: English

Sixtieth session
Item 132 of the provisional agenda*
United Nations common system

Senior Management Network

Note by the Secretary-General

1. In its resolution 59/268, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), to redesignate the Senior Management Service to reflect its character as a set of collaborative efforts to enhance the managerial capacity and performance of senior staff by respective executive heads, and to report to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, clarifying the scope and content of such efforts, for consideration and action if it deemed it necessary.

2. Successfully meeting the challenges facing the organizations of the common system requires a strengthened leadership and management capacity, as well as an enhanced ability to work together. Managers in the United Nations system can no longer be only substantive experts; they must also be leaders of people and managers of resources, information and change, operating in a complex multicultural environment. In the present climate, in which many organizations are decentralizing and delegating authority, there is greater responsibility on managers as key drivers of change, together with enhanced accountability for results. They require the tools and strategies to become more creative, versatile and multi-skilled managers who are client-oriented, team builders, strategic thinkers, who are less risk-averse and able to work collaboratively within and across organizations.

3. The Senior Management Service in the United Nations system, approved by CEB in 2004, was conceived as a means of strengthening managerial and leadership capacity and to contribute to the creation of a common managerial culture throughout the system.

4. In response to resolution 59/268, at its ninth session (April 2005), the CEB High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) endorsed, on behalf of CEB, the redesignation of the Senior Management Service as the Senior Management Network. That designation reflects the main purpose of the initiative in creating a managerial network across the system, is in line with existing CEB terminology and

* A/60/150.

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should allay any concerns about the possible creation of a separate category of staff, or new positions.

5. The Senior Management Network will bring together senior managers throughout the system. Executive heads will be responsible for designating staff for participation in the Network and for guiding its direction. The Network does not involve any change in the conditions of service, compensation or contractual arrangements.

6. The objectives of the Senior Management Network are:

(a) To strengthen managerial and leadership capacity as an integral step in improving organizational performance;

(b) To build a common corporate culture in order to heighten a system-wide esprit de corps;

(c) To facilitate the devolution of responsibility and accountability in relation to core managerial functions;

(d) To enhance inter-agency cohesion and coordination and to promote increased mobility and learning across the system;

(e) To signal a commitment to the professionalism of the management function.

7. A system-wide leadership programme is being designed to underpin the Network. At its ninth session, HLCM also expressed support for the development and implementation of the programme and requested all organizations to collaborate in that regard. The programme aims to build managerial and leadership capacity, strengthen partnerships in the system and increase organizations' ability to work effectively together at all levels, including at the field. It is expected that the programme will be launched in 2006 for groups of senior managers from across the common system. It is intended that further managerial tools will be developed to support members in carrying out their managerial functions.

8. This approach is fully in line with research findings that an initial focus on the leadership group in organizations impacts positively on the management culture and has a positive effect on the rest of the staff. The leadership and managerial development tools expected to be introduced in the context of the Senior Management Network are expected to cascade to other groups of staff and improve overall organizational performance throughout the United Nations system.